http://postww1stampforgeries.org/

Introduction

Stamp Forgeries: Hungary Occupation 1919, Ukraine Tridents 1918, Armenia, 1919-1921.

I previously wrote an e-book *Forgeries of Common Stamps after World War I: Eastern Front, Balkans, Caucasus* about how to detect the most obvious forgeries for the stamp collector of modest means. This leads to eBay, the most central location of the common stamp market. Here, I return to consider the cases I found most difficult.

Why does WWI seem special? It is because powerful kings and emperors ceased to exist forever in Europe after two thousand years. For a brief decade, it looked as though a bright new modern world might emerge, but the Communists and the Fascists destroyed it and set up another world war, followed by the Cold War.

Just before WWI, governments discovered they could place their messages on stamps. The stamps described here all came from new entities, vigorously proclaiming

"We're here."

For the stamp-oriented history of the two decades following WWI, see my e-book *Chaos and Identity*.

I welcome discovery of errors or original analysis**.**

Please feel free to communicate with me directly through the "Contact Us" page

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http://postww1stampforgeries.org/hungary/debrecen-1st-issue/

Debrecen, 1st Issue

These were issued by the Romanian army as they took one of the largest cities in Hungary. They must have expected to stay, considering how much work they did on the stamps, but the Romanians eventually had to give it back. This section covers the commonly found stamps of the first Debrecen (pronounced de-bresh-tion) issue, which is really Plate II, because the first printing only made quantities in the hundreds. The Romanian army used an elliptical overprint with printing inside to show their identity. The presence of the ellipse constained forgers into having to get their spacing right so that measurements don't help.

Left: For the genuine overprint, Brainard lists these requirements.

1. The middle stroke of "E" in "DE" is shorter than the top and bottom strokes.
2. The same is true of the "E" in "OCCUPATIE."
3. The first "1" in "1919" has a big fish hook on the top.
4. The second "9" in "1919" is thicker than the first "9" and almost touches the "N" beneath it.
5. The first "T" in "PTT" has a longer left arm than right arm. Using these guidelines is sometimes not enough, but Brainard gives what is the best rule: the ends of the letters should be squared-off. I pick the region at the top with two "T's" and the right side of the "V."Top 2nd and 3rd: These are crisp genuine overprints when the plates were new. The ends of the "T's" are square and the "V-bars," which look like an "F" here, have spiked ends.Top right: Here the plate is beginning to wear out, the blue is faint, but the ends

still look good.Bottom left: The plate is now very worn but the square edges show it is still genuine.

Bottom center: The most common forgery shows rounded ends on otherwise good-looking letters.

Bottom right: This forgery doesn't look good anywhere.

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It is possible to check for this on Ebay in perhaps a third to a half of the offerings. It has to be entries with two to six stamps where magnification was necessary and where there is good contrast. My stamp counting so far yields 35% genuine.

http://postww1stampforgeries.org/hungary/debrecen-2nd-issue/

Debrecen 2nd Issue

This is the only Hungarian occupation issue that was printed from newly designed plates and then had the Romanian overprint applied on top. Counterfeiters in Paris in the mid 1930's must have hired a professional printer to duplicate this. It does not fit at all into the Hungary model because of the need to create the basic plates plus the overprint.

The postage due stamps are a good place to start because they are all the same color. The first three columns are genuine and the last two are fake. The genuine stamps are blue-green but the fakes are greener. The genuine stamps of the regular series tend to be printed on less-yellowish paper whereas the fakes are on more-yellowish paper (the genuine glazed series were printed on shiny white paper). All of the genuine overprints look worn as though postage due was made after all the other stamps.

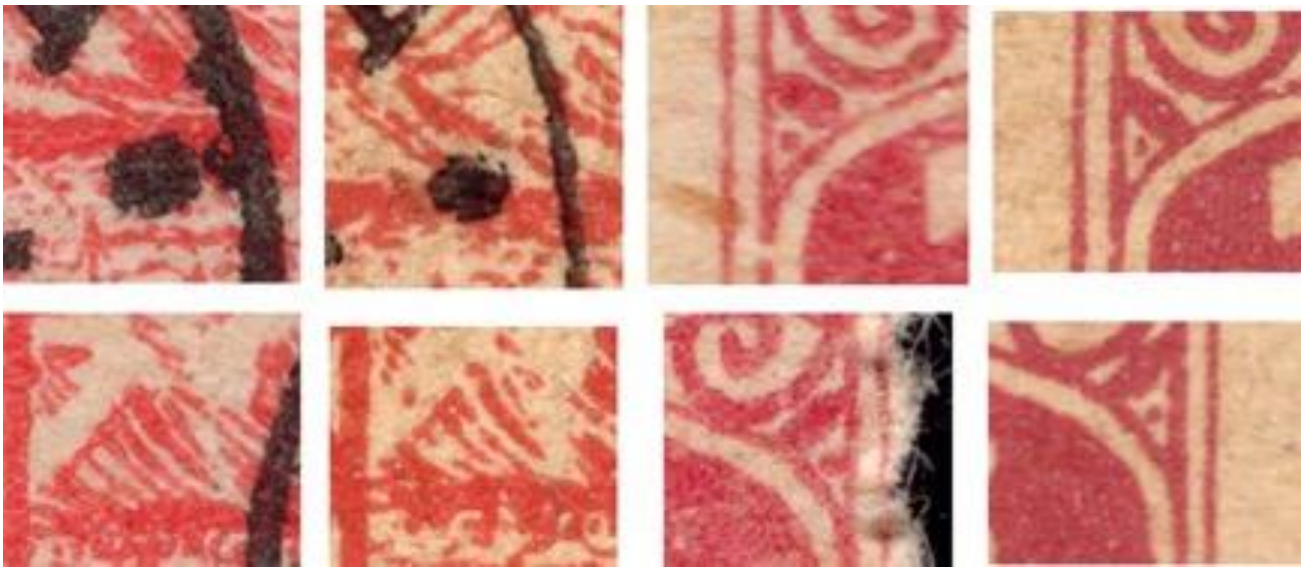
1st column: This is a good-looking genuine overprint for this series, even though it is worn. Brainard has pointed out that the key to being genuine is a blip on the inside of the circle at 2:30 o'clock- clearly a mistake by the engraver. Here the blip looks solid. If we go to the upper left corner of the stamp, we find a small circle with a dot in the middle.

2nd column: This genuine overprint is even more worn and the blip is much reduced but is there. The dot in the circle is so faint it can barely be seen.

3rd column: The genuine overprint looks strong but the blip is not there, although there is some fuzziness. The circle has a strong dot.

4th column: Most forged overprints like this one look way better than the genuine ones. There is no sign of a blip on the circle and the dot is gone.

Last column: This is a rare lightly-done forged overprint. Again, there is no blip and no dot.



For the eagle and the horseman series, we first look for the 2:30 blip on the inner rim as the first measure of being genuine. The fakes are usually on yellowish paper and the forged overprints are usually nicer than the originals.

Left column, top: We go to the mountains at 9:00 o'clock up against the left frame, where the mountains have parallel white lines curving downward to the right.

2nd column, top: The fake eagle has no blip at all. On the fake, two of the white mountain lines touch, forming an "H" lying at 45 degrees.

3rd column, top: On the genuine horseman stamp, go to the far lower left just inside the frame and just above the denomination. There is a "potato" filling the triangular space and just touching the edges. The bottom shows the same thing on the right side except that the potato is extended. Below each potato is a large dot.

Right column: On the fake horseman stamps, the potato extends so far it looks like a solid bar, and the dot below is small.

For the sunrise and stretcher series, we first look for the 2:30 blip on the inner rim as the first measure of being genuine. The fakes are usually on yellowish paper and the forged overprints are usually nicer than the originals.

Left column: At the left of the genuine sunrise, the lowest line in the sky is completely above the trees, although sometimes not by much. Bottom: At the far left of the genuine sunrise stamp, inside the lowest "tulip" in the frame design is a vertical "fish". The dark "head" of the fish appears to tilt upward to the right, although this is not always clear.

2nd column, left: The lowest line in the faked sky just touches the highest tree. Bottom: The faked fish head is level.

3rd column: This is the last sunrise thing to look for. Top: Above the genuine white line above "Magyar," there is a second, thin white line, which is mostly filled to varying degrees with ink. Bottom: The faked second upper line is all white with no inflowing ink, and it is just too neat.

4th Column, top: The semi-postal stretcher series has the overprint "Segely-belyeg" (aid stamps). The genuine "S" has serifs. Bottom: the genuine "g" is well-formed with the two parts delicately connected.

Right Column, top: The forged "S" has no serifs and the ink has spread outwards. Bottom: The forged "g" is clumsy.

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My count of stamps gives a high 72%. The average number of available stamps, with 1,000 subtracted for being held in collections, is 27,600, which is about the same as the other four cities. There is no reason that completely printed fakes should have the same statistics as the overprint-only stamps, but it is surprising that, after all the extra work required, the fakers made so few stamps. Of the genuine stamps, 15% show no blip, so this feature cannot always be counted on.

http://postww1stampforgeries.org/hungary/banat-bacska/

Banat-Bacska

These were issued by the Serbian army as it moved north into Hungary. There are five overprint types, but the most common are 1 through 3. Overprint 1 is on the harvesters, Charles/Zita and the semipostals. Overprint 3 is for the KOZTARSASAG harvester, and Charles/Zita. A space is deliberately left for the "KOZTARSASAG" overprint previously placed there by the Republic. Overprint 2 is on the parliament and parliament-KOZTARSASAG stamps.

There is considerable forging activity for overprint 1. One measure to consider is the angle for "Banat" to the horizontal. The distance selected is at the left bottom of the "B" to the bottom of the comma. If there is no comma, then we go the bottom of the final "a." This measure works only so far, because many forgeries got this right, and we then have to consider the printing.

Overprint 1 with forgeries

Top left: Brainard's example of the genuine overprint. "Banat" lies at a 38-degree angle to the horizontal. He gives these requirements:

1. The top loop of both "B's" is smaller than the bottom loop.
2. The top loops of the "a's" in "Banat are shorter than the width of the body.
3. The second "a" in "Bacska" has a curve on the upper loop.
4. In "1919," the leg of the second "9" is longer than the first.

Top center: This genuine overprint has "9's" with long curving tails that get thinner. The Banat angle varies from 34 to 40 degrees.

Top right: This forgery has awful printing so that it is easy to spot. Often the comma is missing entirely and the first "9" has too long a tail, a common failing. The Banat angle lies at 19 to 22 degrees, which seems a big difference but it is easy to miss with a quick look. I am not considering here the forged angles near vertical and horizontal, because these miserable efforts are easily obvious.

Bottom left: This forgery has better printing but it has "stubby 9's," whose tails are too short. Sometimes the comma is missing. The Banat angles vary from 21 to 48 degrees, showing that multiple forgers were at work. A few will have angles the same as the genuine stamp.

Bottom center: This forgery has nice looking letters, which are too heavy. The "B's" have bigger top loops and sometimes the comma is missing. Although the relative length of the "9's" is correct, they look too stocky. The Banat angle is 35 to 38 degrees, just like the genuine case.

Bottom right: This forgery has letters that are too "square" and look too perfect. The top loops of the "B's" are too big and the top curves of the "a's" bend over to the left too far. The printing is light and the final "a" has a flat top. The angles vary from 36 to 42 degrees, just like the genuine stamps.

Overprint 3 with forgeries.

Top left: Brainard's description of the genuine stamp. He says:

1. The top loop of the "B" in "Banat" is larger than the bottom and protrudes out to the right. This is the opposite of overprint 1. The "B" in "Bacska" has not changed and has a bigger lower loop.
2. The "a's" have flat tops which are not as wide as the letters.
3. The "t" is shifted up relative to the other letters.

Brainard's Banat angle is 38 degrees, the same as for overprint 1. The "9's" have the same long curves with diminishing width, but the lengths can be the same.

Note also that "Bacska" has now moved to the left and sits outside of "Banat" whereas it was the opposite for overprint 1.

Top 2nd: This genuine stamp is in a group with Banat angles of 40 to 45 degrees to the horizontal and separation distances between top letters and the bottom date of 17 to 20 mm. This space allows the overprint to fit on both sides of KOZTARSASAG.

Top 3rd: As before, this is so-so lettering with stubby "9's." The Banat angle can be 25 to 44 degrees. This one is easy because the separation distance is only 11 mm and the two overprints overlap. Also, "Bacska" is displaced too far to the right because the forger used overprint 1 as a guide.

Top right: This "stubby-9" forgery has the proper separation. Overall, these distances vary continuously from 11 to 24 mm, indicating that many different forgers were at work.

Bottom left: Again we have the "square" forgery (see bottom right in the figure above), where the letters look too nice. The Banat angles are all good at 38 to 43 degrees, but the separation distances run continuously from 10 to 23 mm. Many of the overprints lie over each other. Here, "Bacska" is displaced too far to the right.

Bottom 2nd: Another "square" forgery here has enough space to include the old overprint. "Bacska" has moved back to the left but the "9's" are too stubby.

Bottom 3rd: Another forgery has good printing, including the tailing "9's," but the Banat "B" has a smaller top loop and the "a's" have curved tops. Worrying about the letters is not necessary for this one, because the two overprints lie on each other. The Banat angles run 38 to 43 degrees and most separation distances are 10 to 11 mm.

Bottom right: The smaller top loop B in "Banat" could be a problem if enough separation were present. This one is wider at 16 mm, which is not quite enough.

Overprint 2, on the parliaments.

Top left: This is Brainard's genuine overprint and he says:

1. The bottom loop of the Banat "B" is larger than the top loop.
2. The top loop of the Bacska "B" is a little larger than the bottom loop.
3. The lower leg of the "k" extends from about the middle of the upper stroke and it may bend slightly.
4. The second "9" has a slightly longer leg than the first "9."

Top center: In this genuine stamp, the "9's" have that spidery look in the long curving pointed tails.

Top right: All is right in this KOZTARSASAG version.

Bottom left: This forgery has blunted tails on the "9's." The printing is crude and the comma is missing.

Bottom center: This version is the most common forgery. They got the fonts and the B-loops right, but the "9's" have longer but constant-thickness tails, which are not spidery.

Bottom right: The "9's" again have constant-thickness tails. The top of the "S" does not bend far enough to the right. There is no period after "1919."

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Now I count up the stamps and I have 29% genuine. For forged overprint 1, half have the first “9” longer than the second and the other half have truncated “9’s” tails. In general, the fonts are bad. For forged overprint 3, half have too small a space and the other half have the right space but possess other negative issues. For forged overprint 2, the forged “9’s” are not spidery and the letters are usually crude.

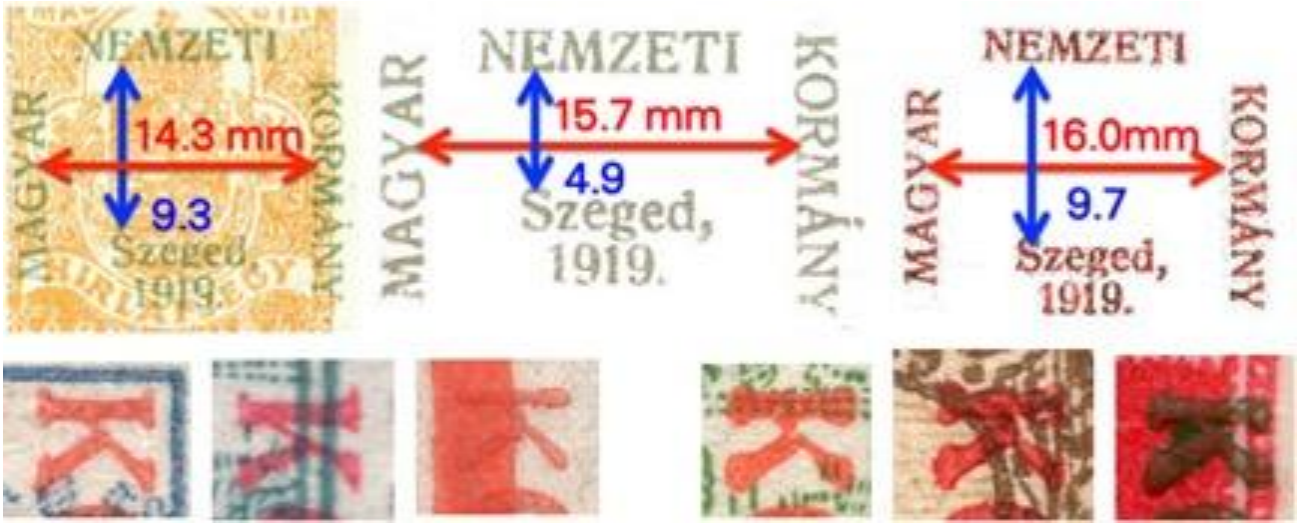
http://postww1stampforgeries.org/hungary/szeged/

Szeged

When the Communists seized power, an anti-Communist government formed in Arad and moved to Szeged where French troops protected them. The Szeged overprints proclaim the new Hungary, which ultimately sent Admiral Horthy to rule once the Romanian army had thrown out the Communists.

The basic Szeged overprint is shown below and it says “Hungarian National Government.” There are three basic overprints, which have the same layout but different dimensions. Type 1 appears on the harvester and Charles-Zita, with and without KOZTARSASAG (Republic), semipostals, special delivery and newspaper. Type 2 appears only on the parliament stamps. Type 3 appears only on the regular and PORTO (“postage”) postage due stamps.

Printing started in shop1 but halted because of a labor dispute. The unfinished sheets and plates were carried to shop 2 and the work continued. Shop 1 used vermillion (also called cinnabar) ink and shop 2 used carmine. The green ink was about the same in both places but shop 2 stamps generally show more wear, because they were done later



Basic Szeged Overprint

Top: The three basic genuine overprints are taken from complete sheets, courtesy of Chris Brainard. Left to right: type 1-harvester/Charles/Zita; type 2-parliament, and type 3-postage due. They look the same except for the dimensions as measured by Lyman Caswell. Note how "NEMZETI" in overprint 2 sits between the sidebars rather than above as with the other two.

Bottom left: This is a typical genuine "K" in "KORMANY." It is crisp with well-formed serifs.

Bottom 2nd: This genuine "K" has a slanted bar in 20% of the type 1 overprints. It is still crisp with good serifs.

Bottom 3rd: This genuine "K" has a different font with no serifs, showing that the postal authorities must have run out of the basic type. This occurs a few times on each sheet.

Bottom 4th through right: These stamps are forgeries because they are not crisp, and this shows up easily on the "K." They do have all basically the right fonts and dimensions and constitute the largest group of fakes.

Top left: This is a genuine shop 1 “red” with a vermillion color. It was applied only to parliaments, so a carmine parliament is automatically a forgery. In the genuine stamp, the second “1” in “1919” points up to the spine of the “g” above it.

Top middle: This is a genuine shop 2, where the carmine seems almost too bright. However, the missing “1” in “1919, which appears to be correctly pointed at the “g,” is seen at plate position 55. We also confirm that the left top of the “N” in “NEMZETI” is too short. So this seems real and must be shop 2 at its best.

Top right: This is a genuine green overprint, which could be from either shop. The greens vary from olive green to dark green with no way to tell who made it, except that extreme wear means shop 2. Once again, the second “1” points to the spine of the “g.”

Bottom left: This is a non-crisp forgery of the type mentioned above, except that this one is neon bright orange, even though the second “1” in “1919” is where it is supposed to be.

Bottom 2nd: This is the famous forgery popularized by Brainard. Here the second “1” points to the right side of the “g” above it. Otherwise, the font looks good.

Bottom 3rd: This is another g-to-the-right forgery where the font looks bad. It’s just the non-crisp version of this forgery.

Bottom 4th: Here the g is in the right place but the font is even worse.

Bottom right: Here the font is good but this forgery has blue-green ink, a sure giveaway. In some cases, the blue-green fonts look bad, too.

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The stamps were printed using half-plates of 50, which were twice-printed onto sheets of 100 Hapsburg Hungarian stamps. A detailed description of the Baranya plates has been written and the Szeged plates were probably similar. A standardized metal type was set by hand in each of the one hundred locations, and each half-plate was soldered into a solid mass. That means there was no master copy to be accurately reproduced a hundred times. With this approach, we must expect that the overprints will be slightly different in each position.

Above, we saw that the "1" needs to be under the spine of the "g" to be genuine, but now we belabor the issue. Chris Brainard kindly gave me pictures of full sheets of overprints 1 and 2 and a half-sheet of 3. I am measuring the horizontal distance between the ""g"" in "Szeged" and the second ""1"" in ""1919""using Photoshop. I am using the horizontal width of the word ""Szeged,"" measured with a magnified millimeter scale, as the standard length. The ""g"" is constructed of a lower and upper bowl with a connecting curve. Where this curve intersects the upper bowl of the ""g," I define as zero. The other position is in the middle of the ""1"" in the upper half. The measurements were done with a full-screen blowup, where 0.05 mm is probably the error.

I divided the results into bins 0.1 mm wide, added them up and multiplied them to make all of them add to 100%. This way, each bin gives a rough probability of finding the next stamp of this kind.

The table below says that genuine overprints lie on the spine of the ""g"" or 0.1 mm to the left. The wings tail off 0.1 mm in either direction so that the entire width is 0.3 mm. If the available plates are indeed representative of everything, this defines genuine.

Here are the results of the measurements of the position of the "1" relative to the "g." About 90% of the stamps lie on the spine of the "g" or 0.1 mm left of it. The numbers are the percent probability of finding a stamp in a given bin.

Lower Edge (mm)	Upper Edge (mm)	Bin Center (mm)	overprint #1 semipostal 47 stamps	overprint #1 newspaper 93 stamps	overprint #2 parliament 92 stamps	overprint #3 postage due 48 stamps
-0.25	-0.15	-0.2	11	4	0	6
-0.15	-0.05	-0.1	40	41	36	38
-0.05	0.05	0	45	49	55	46
0.05	0.15	0.1	4	5	9	10

Here, we consider the details stemming from the study of where the "1" should be under the genuine "g."

Left: This is the genuine overprint with the "1" on the spine of the "g."

2nd, 3rd, 4th: These are the "classic" forgeries with the "1' way far to the right. These are the better-looking fonts.

5th: This "1" is 0.3 mm to the right but it is still slightly left of center of the middle of the "g." This is a forgery, based also on the lack of a serif on the top of the "1."

6th: This is 0.25 mm to the left, just a little too far, but maybe it's real.

Right: This is almost 0.4 mm to the left, which is probably too far and constitutes a rare kind of forgery.

The hundred overprint types for the two sheets of 50 were assembled one by one by putting individual letters and numbers together. Mistakes were made and the hastily created plates must have broken as the printing went on. These overprints, courtesy of Chris Brainard, are a snapshot in defining what is genuine.

Top left: Overprint 1, position 41 (OP1-41) has the best error of all. "MAGYAR" is running downward instead of upward.

Top 2nd: "Szeged" in OP3-10 is spelled "Sevged." Also, note that both "N" and "K" have no serifs.

Top 3rd: The "z" in "Szeged" in OP1-39 is missing. A small mark suggests that a letter might have been there at the start but broke. There are three of these in OP1.

Top right: The "e" in "Szeged" in OP1-46 is missing. There are five of these in OP1.

The bottom genuine overprints are all overprint 2 on the parliament stamps.

Bottom left: The top of "NEMZETI" is at the same height as the "K" in "KORMANY" in 58 of the genuine hundred stamps.

Bottom 2nd: The genuine "K" is half a letter lower 31 times.

Bottom 3rd: The genuine "K" is half a letter higher 10 times.

Bottom right: The genuine "NEMZETI" is way high once in OP2-48, and this counts as an error.

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Here is a list of the “mistakes” in the overprints, as opposed to the three errors shown above. It is possible that some of these were not there in the first printing and some became worse at the end.

	Overprint Number		
Mistake	1	2	3
Stamps on Plate surveyed	100	100	50
"K" in "KORMANY" has no serifs	1	6	3
no "e" in "Szeged"	5	1	
half of first "1" missing	4	1	
first "1" has no serifs	2	3	
"KORMANY" shredded at top			4
"NEMZETI" leaning down		3	1
"N" in "NEMZETI" has no serifs		2	1
no "z" in "Szeged"	3		
half of last "1" missing	3		
"I" in "NEMZETI" too low		2	
left side of "M" gone	2		
"KO" hardly there	2		
"O" with a a mark inside		2	
second "1" is missing	1	1	
half of first "9" missing	2		
most of last "9" missing	2		
second "1" has no serifs	2		
"NEMZETI" leaning up	1		
all of "Szed" missing		1	
"S" and "g" missing		1	
most of "z" missing		1	
leaning upward "1919"		1	
no "91" in "1919"	1		
first "1"in "1919" is missing	1		

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The 10 filler rose red harvester is scarce- only 1200 were put out. Is there any chance of finding it on the common market?

Left: Example #1 has only half of the "e" in Szeged. Also, part of the second "9" is missing.

2nd: Overprint OP1-8 also shows a truncated "e" along with the same missing part of the "9," so maybe #1 is genuine!

3rd to right: Example #2 has a uniquely tilted line in the "K," which occurs only a few times on the genuine sheet. Also, the bottom of the first "9" is slightly higher than the "1's" on either side. Finally, the "M" has one side tilted, making it look curved, which is very unusual. Putting the three oddities together, there is nothing on the sheet that looks like it. This appears to be a first-rate forgery.

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At the end, I count up the stamps and get 36% genuine. Half the forgeries have the "g" in the right place and most of these have the right font but are not "crisp," and the rest are just plain bad. The famous too-far-right–of-g forgery accounts for only a quarter of the forgeries split halfway between presentable and bad. The rest are the blue-greens, the slightly-rights and the too-far-lefts.

http://postww1stampforgeries.org/hungary/arad/

Arad

These were issued by the French army of occupation and say so with just one overprint type presumably done in one shop. To be genuine, Brainard lists the following requirements. These are:

1. Instead of a “c” in “Francaise,” we have an upside-down “5.” This should look like a “c” except for the lower part.
2. The crossbar on the “f” should be squared-off on both sides. This is less pronounced on red overprints.
3. The “p” should show a sharp serif at the bottom pointing to the right.
4. The ”u,” “r” and “a” have sharp serifs.
5. Overall, everything should look crisp and robust.

Here are complete overprints for Arad. The top line is genuine and the rest forgeries.

Top Line: The left one is fresh and crisp. The second one has a high “O” but Chris Brainard has just pointed out that this unusual case is genuine, as seen by the good-looking “f.” The right one is genuine but with a worn plate. The “f”-crossbar is fairly square and the serif under the “p” looks good.

Middle Line: These are better-looking forgeries. The left one has a different type with even bigger serifs plus a spike on the upside down “5,” a sure giveaway. The last two has rounded ends on the “f” crossbars, rounded serifs and an overall ratty appearance. The right one is a “spikey-five,” hidden behind the earlier black overprint.

Bottom Line: These forgeries go from bad to worse. There is no serif at all on the “p.” The ”f”-crossbar becomes more smeared and the overall appearance is just bad.

The “O” in “Occupation” can be high in a genuine stamp. The parliament block of four comes from a sheet of 60, where every first column stamp has a high “O.” The soldier block of four comes from a sheet of 25. Both have 20% high “O’s.” Pictures and observations courtesy of Chris Brainard.

Here are close-ups of the Arad overprints.

Top left and 2nd: Genuine and crisp. The “f” crossbar is squared-off and the serifs are sharp.

Top 3rd and 4th: Genuine but with the plate getting worn.

Top 5th and right: Probably genuine but with more wear and KOTZARSASAG gets in the way. KOTZARSASAG (Republic) was the overprint of the short-lived government overthrown by the Communists.

Bottom left and 2nd: The font looks good on this forgery but the execution is a bit fuzzy. The “f” crossbar is rounded and the serif on the “p” is obscured. This is the closest that the forgers got to the real thing- a “dangerous” forgery.

Bottom 3rd: This is the famous fake- the “Spikey-5.” The “p” also has no serif. This forgery is not that common because most forgers did a better job with the “5.”

Bottom 4th: The “O” is up too high and might still be real, but rounded crossbars on the “f” show it is a forgery.

Bottom 5th: The fonts are deteriorating on this forgery but the “p” has a hint of a serif.

Bottom right: On this forgery, there is no serif at all on the “p.”

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Bottom 4th: The fonts look good on this forgery but the “O” is up too high.

Bottom 5th: The fonts are deteriorating on this forgery but the “p” has a hint of a serif.

Bottom right: On this forgery, there is no serif at all on the “p.”

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In counting Arad stamps, I find 15% genuine- the lowest of the four cities. These forgeries break down into these groups.

1. About half have no problem with the “5” and the “O,” but there is no serif on the bottom of the “p.” The fonts are generally crude.
2. About 1/6th are spikey-5’s of two types. One is crudely done with no serifs and the other better–looking but in the wrong font. The spikes make it obvious.
3. Another 1/6th has the “O” displaced upwards. There appear to be three versions at least, most with crude letters. One has nice letters with squared ends and serifs but the “O” gives it away.
4. The final 1/6th have a feeble serif on the bottom of the “p.” Most of the fonts are crude but this group also includes the dangerous forgery shown above.

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